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HISTORY OF COMPANY "M"
MILITIA AND NATIONAL GUARD

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MILITIA AND NATIONAL GUARD

1893

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Lt. Gen. Lloyd D. Ross

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HISTORY OF COMPANY "M"
MILITIA AND NATIONAL GUARD

From - October 18, 1893
To - July 1, 1940

By Lt. General Lloyd D. Ross
August 23, 1953

A narrative of Montgomery County and Red Oak for the last one hundred years would not be complete unless it contained a story about Company "M". Its beginning, its accomplishments, brought about by grit - enterprise and hard work, with attention to painstaking details, wrought the last sixty years are worthy of the highest commendation.

Red Oak had a militia company in the years following the Civil War but it had been mustered out in early years of the 1890's. J. W. Clark, who was an instructor in the Red Oak High School and had organized a Cadet Company among the boys of the school and also was Sergeant Major in the battalion commanded by Major W. H. Evans, a Red Oak Jeweler, hence the military spirit was reawakened and a temporary organization was effected, with Jesse W. Clark as Captain, W. Harry French as First Lieutenant and Guy E. Logan as Second Lieutenant. This organization became a sort of social center of the town as the preliminary members were taken from the best families and membership therein was by ballot of the members.

Under the leadership of the officers this temporary organization began training, using the rifles issued to the Red Oak High School Cadets. Soon a vacancy occurred in a regiment of the militia and an application was forwarded to the Adjutant General's office to fill this vacancy and the application was accepted. After an inspection by the Colonel of the regiment, C. V. Mount and Captain John O. Hume, the Adjutant of the 3d Regiment, the organization was accepted and Twenty-nine (29) charter members were mustered into the State Militia as Company "M" 3d Regiment, on October 18, 1893.

The charter members being, Jesse W. Clark, W. Harry French, E. J. Nixon, Alexis M. Hawkins, Harry F. Brown, Louis E. Bake, Chas. C. Palmer, Herbert C. Lane, John J. Shuey, Tim Jackson, William B. Gammiell, Thos. F. Zuber, W. C. Marshall, Ivan E. Ellwood, Henry E. Burlson, Art L. Gregory, Hartwell W. Palmer, Chas. W. Taylor, J. Etna Throw, Fred A. Kidder, Guy E. Logan, Owen C. Hawkins, Mervin D. Stocksleger, C. H. Holliper, Fred Tonner, J. E. Gochenour, Chas. B. Rose, Chester C. Epps, Henry A. Nordquist. The Temporary officers were selected as the officers and the non-commissioned officers were appointed as follows: John J. Shuey, First Sergeant; Chas. B. Rose, Hartwell W. Palmer, Edw. J. Nixon and Herbert C. Lane, Sergeants; Carl L. Austin, Louis B. Bake, Fred E. Kidder and Owen Hawkins, Corporals.

In the spring of 1894, Coxey led his army of ragged knights on Washington, D. C. On Saturday, April 14, word reached Red Oak that one division of that army under the command of one

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Kelly, had seized a Union Pacific Railroad train and would enter the State of Iowa at Council Bluffs. The 3d Regiment of Iowa Militia, including Co. "M" was ordered under arms by the then Governor of the state and sent to Council Bluffs. This tour of duty lasted six days.

The first encampment which Co. "M" attended was held at Creston, Iowa, in July, 1894, and just previous to this encampment three recruits were enlisted from the Red Oak High School cadets, viz.: Everett Lane, Ed M. Rose and Lloyd D. Ross, the latter maintained a continuous membership in the Militia and National Guard of the State of Iowa in the different grades for a period of forty-six years and retired as Commanding General.

The next few years were prosperous ones in the annals of Company "M". When terms of enlistment expired, some few of the charter members who had been married, retired. Applications for membership were being approved by the organization and new recruits were then received. Under the training of its very efficient officers the company maintained its place at the head of the 48th infantry companies of the state. The highest rating it received in 1896, when a record of 106.83 out of a possible 109 points were received.

During the summer of 1896 it became very evident to the members of Company "M" that something must be done to secure a permanent home, as the old building used as an armory had become so dilapidated it was unsafe for the cadets of marching men.

When the company was first organized it made a condition of membership that each man should agree to turn in his camp pay into the company treasury. This money formed the nucleus of an armory fund and such payment of the camp pay of the members continued for many years until the building was cleared of debt. The Red Oak Armory Company was formed as a corporate organization, with stock at \$10.00 per share. Sufficient stock was sold to the influential citizens of Red Oak which, with a mortgage, completed the building. All the stock sold to citizens was later redeemed at par or surrendered as a gift to the Armory Company. Due to the lack of suitable storage space for the increasing amounts of government property, and club and entertainment rooms, the armory building was remodeled and a second floor added during the early years of the 1910 period. This was accomplished by placing a mortgage on the clear building and now today the building is clear of debt.

A short distance off the southern coast of Florida lay the island of Cuba. For years it had been in the possession of Spain and was ruled by a haughty, cruel, licentious governor, sent out from the mother country. The Cuban people wanted to be free and rebelled against their oppressors. For years they were war ridden, driven from their homes into concentration camps, where they were left to starve or die of disease. The people of the United States sympathized with the Cubans and the government brought diplomatic pressure to ease their burdens. This action angered the Spaniards and threats were made against our legal representatives and all Americans in Cuba. The Battleship Maine was sent to Havana to protect these Americans. On the night of February 15, 1898, while anchored in the harbor, the vessel was destroyed by an exterior explosion against her hull and with her destruction 259 of her personnel perished. This outrage led to a declaration of War against Spain by the Congress of the United States on April 21, 1898. On April 23d, the President called for 125,000 volunteers and the

Governors of the several states were authorized to assemble the various organizations of their state guard at the various state capitols.

On April 22, 1898, Company "M" received the order to prepare for war. Recruiting had been going on for a month but on the receipt of this order, came a stampede from those who wanted to join, mostly from the high school boys who had to get their parents' consent to enlist and in many cases that consent was not easy to obtain. On Tuesday morning at 8:15 o'clock A.M. April 26, 1898, Company "M" left Red Oak with sixty-five (65) men and three officers for Des Moines. The route over the C B & Q R R was an ovation. Every town and village passed by the troop train had its quota of cheering and enthusiastic people.

At Des Moines the troops were assembled at the State Fair Grounds and were housed in the horse and cattle barns. On April 27, the camp was named Camp McKinley and General James Rush Lincoln was placed in command of Iowa's four infantry regiments. The routine duty commenced and with it the trying ordeal of transforming green militiamen into soldiers. Due to the thought, in some quarters, that the volunteer regiments should not have a regiment's designation the same as a civil war regiment from Iowa and the last civil war regiment had been designated the 48th regiment, the designations of Iowa's four regiments were changed to the 49th, 50th, 51st and 52d, Company "M" being in the 51st. On Decoration Day May 30, 1898, the 51st was mustered into United States service as the 51st Iowa Regiment U. S. volunteers.

On June 4th the 51st received official orders to leave on June 5, 1898, for San Francisco, California. The travel for Co. "M" was routed over the C B & Q R R through Red Oak. This gave the boys a chance for a last farewell. On June 11th Company "M" arrived in San Francisco and were marched three and one-half miles to Camp Merritt, an area of sand lots, with winds blowing the sand in all directions. The area assigned to the 51st and Company "M" had in years gone by, been a Chinese burying ground. The conditions in this camp were probably the cause of the deaths which the company suffered before it finally sailed for the Philippine Islands.

During the last days of July 1898 the 51st was moved from the sand lot camp to solid ground, located on the United States military reservation and located directly on San Francisco Bay and near the Golden Gate. Here Company "M" found much better quarters and some shelter from the winds. The weeks and months which passed while the 51st regiment awaited assignment to a ship for transportation to Manila were given over to drill and parade. Probably the most important event being the winning of a competitive drill and the Shreve Silver Cup at Mechanics Pavillion, this cup was sent to Red Oak and still is in the possession of Company "M". Company "M" also had two men on the regimental football team which defeated Stanford University at San Jose and the University of California at Oakland, Calif.

On October 28, 1898 the 51st Iowa was assigned to the transport Pennsylvania and Thursday, November 3d, was named as the day for sailing. Company "M" was assigned space in the middle of the hold of the ship, with an open space on the second deck for mess. The food was cooked in huge steamers below deck. Very little food was consumed by the company the first few days after sailing as the Pennsylvania had a pitch and roll few stomachs could withstand. On

November 11, the Pennsylvania docked at Honolulu and all men were taken off the ship and it was given a very necessary cleaning from prow to stern and fumigated.

After three days and nights, in which the men visited as much of Honolulu as possible, the ship was loaded again and headed for Manila, Philippine Islands, 5000 miles away, which was reached on December 8, 1898, where the Pennsylvania was anchored about a mile from shore and there it remained until December 26, when it was ordered to sail with the Iowa troops for Ilo Ilo, Panay Island, with other troop ships, to relieve a Spanish garrison surrounded by insurgents. On December 27th, a ship was met coming from Ilo Ilo, which gave the information that the city had surrendered to the insurgents and that the Spanish garrison was on board. The expedition proceeded anyway, and arrived at Ilo Ilo on December 28, 1898. Authorities decided not to force a landing as they wanted the insurgents to make the first move. Another month passed, with the Iowa troops cooped up aboard the transport Pennsylvania. Finally the medical section declared they would no longer be responsible for the health of the Iowa troops if they remained on the transport. Accordingly, the transport was ordered back to Manila where the troops were unloaded at Cavite Navy Yard on February 2, 1899, and were placed under the command of Admiral Dewey. The Iowa troops were on the transport Pennsylvania ninety-two days, a world record in the transportation of troops to that date.

Company "M" was assigned quarters within the walled fort and were very comfortable and here the company was located when the insurgents opened the American-Philippine war by attacking the city of Manila on February 4, 1899. The company remained on duty in Cavite, guarding the arsenal located there until April 1st, when they were transferred to Manila for guard duty within the old walled city and were on such duty during the Easter week of 1899. On April 14th they were relieved from this duty and the 51st regiment was assembled on the north line and ordered to relieve the 10th Pennsylvania regiment, which regiment took up our old duty at Cavite. By this change, Company "M" became a part of the fighting line forcing the insurgents to the north. A rather severe battle was fought at Calumpit lasting three days. On May 9th, after a brush with the insurgents at Apalet, Philippine Islands, the company reached San Fernando with some fighting opposition. During the months of May, June, July and August, severe fighting resulted from the Americans' defense of the City of San Fernando and the repeated attempts of the insurgents to recapture it. Early in September, General Arthur MacArthur, father of Douglas MacArthur of World War I fame, ordered an advance and once again Company "M" was in the fight. September 4th the line reached Calulut, where the 51st was relieved from the line and ordered to Manila to prepare for return to the States.

The 51st was assigned to the transport Senator for the return to the States. This transport was routed by way of Japan for the return journey. It left Manila on September 22, 1899. Landings of the men were made at Nagasaki, where coal was taken on, and at Yokohama, where a visit to Tokyo by rail was permitted. On October 6th the transport left Yokohama bound for San Francisco, with a heavy storm raging, but the Senator was a staunch vessel and it arrived in San Francisco safely the last days of October, 1899. Iowa political authorities were anxious to get the troops to Iowa in time for November elections. Accordingly preparations for the discharge of the men were rushed to such a degree that on November 1st the

men were on the special trains provided by the State of Iowa. Company "M" was assigned the last train and lost so much time due to various causes that it was 11:40 P.M. Monday, November 6th, when it reached Red Oak, where a welcome surpassing any reception it had experienced on the way home and running into the wee small hours of the morning awaited. The next few days were given over to official receptions and banquets. Before disbanding Company "M" held its last mess. It was difficult to break friendships made by soldiers who have shared the life and dangers of a campaign during war. In retrospect, of a company strength of 105 men and three officers, 76 men returned to the United States as a company, 23 had been previously discharged for disability due to sickness. During the campaigns eight had been wounded and five had died while in camp in San Francisco.

As of today, a record of those known to be alive and their home addresses is in existence containing the names of thirty-two officers and men of Company "M", 51st Iowa U. S. Volunteers as living today. Four men are listed as condition unknown.

The military spirit remained high in Red Oak and although Company "M", 51st Iowa U. S. Vol. vanished when the men received their discharge in San Francisco, before many days had passed at home, the urge to form another company to succeed it arose. Accordingly, on November 21, 1899, a new Company "M" was formed. The officers were Captain Jesse W. Clark; 1st Lieutenant Guy E. Logan and 2d Lieutenant Owen C. Hawkins. It was not possible to secure the names of the enlisted men but many of the comrades who survived the campaigns in the Philippines re-enlisted. When the new regiment was formed Captain Clark was made a Lieutenant Colonel and Guy E. Logan was promoted to Captain, Owen C. Hawkins was promoted to 1st Lieutenant and Lloyd D. Ross was promoted from Sergeant to 2nd Lieutenant. On April 27, 1903, he was promoted to Captain and assigned to State Headquarters as Inspector of Rifle Practice and Sergeant Ivan E. Ellwood was promoted to 2d Lieutenant. On April 1, 1905, Captain Guy E. Logan was appointed Assistant Adjutant General and moved to Des Moines. Lieutenant Ivan E. Ellwood was promoted to Captain.

During the period November 21, 1899, to July 5, 1910, Company "M" maintained its high record of efficiency and continued to enlist the highest class of men as its members. Captain Ivan E. Ellwood was promoted to Major just previous to July 1910 and Captain Lloyd D. Ross, Headquarters Staff, was assigned to command Company "M", July 5, 1910. During the five year period July 1910-1916, the company maintained its high standard of proficiency but had difficulty in maintaining its enlistments. The Congress had been working slowly on the National Defence Act, which would make the National Guard a National force and make it more attractive to its members. It was not until June 1916 that Congress finally passed this legislation. During this period there were several changes in the Lieutenants in the company. Houghton and Cramer resigning and First Lieutenant C. Frank Wilson and Second Lieutenant C. O. Briggs becoming officers.

Increasing trouble with the Mexican Revolutionists along the Mexican Border was given as the cause under which President Wilson called out the Guard of the several states on June 18, 1916. Company "M" was assembled at Camp Dodge and was mustered into the Federal Service June 26, 1916, with Lloyd D. Ross as Captain, C. O. Briggs and John C. Christopher as Lieutenants, and left immediately for the border of Texas. Here, besides guarding the border Company

"M" and other companies passed through a very intensive period of field training and maneuvers. Many officers felt this training to be a prelude to the service called for in World War I. Company "M" returned to Des Moines and was returned to State service February 20, 1917.

The officers and enlisted men of the company had scarcely gotten acquainted with their families when the rumblings of the Great World War I became louder and more threatening to the United States. This war had been going on since the year 1914 in Europe, now it threatened the lives and interests of American citizens through unrestricted submarine warfare against the shipping of the United States. The Congress of the United States declared a state of war between the United States and the Central Powers on April 6, 1917. By this time steps had been taken to increase the military forces of the United States and the State of Iowa immediately started recruiting its Guard companies. Lieutenant C. O. Briggs was designated recruiting officer for Company "M" to enlist to a strength of 100 enlisted men. He reached this number by the close of April. In the meantime Company "M" had its annual inspection on March 28 and 29, 1917. All men who refused to take the Federal oath and all married men were ordered discharged.

On May 22, 1917 recruiting was ordered resumed and the limit of enlistment set at 150 enlisted men. Captain Ross was ordered to duty for recruiting these extra men. On June 29th orders were received from General Logan, the Adjutant General, to order the entire company into service on July 1, 1917 and begin company training. A camp was established at Chautauqua Park with shelter for the company in tents and a kitchen for mess. On July 4th the entire Company was a guest of the Atlantic Amusement Association as Company "M" had about fifty men from Atlantic for recruits. Company "M" put up the entertainment, which included a parade, exhibition, drills and sham battle attack on Messines Ridge and returned to Red Oak the next day with \$300.00 added to the mess fund.

On July 25, 1917, after receiving inoculations for typhoid fever and vaccinations for small pox, the Company was mustered into Federal Service but remained in Red Oak. In order to show the people at home that we could entertain ourselves, and also to give them an evening entertainment, in a small way, to return the many favors the men had received, a show was gotten up under the supervision of Lieutenant Christopher. The Chautauqua pavillion was packed on this night, August 15, 1917, and the entertainment had hardly started when Captain Ross was called to the telephone and received an order to bring Company "M" to Des Moines at once to join the regiment, which regiment had been designated the 168 Infantry, and that the regiment had been ordered to Camp Mills, Long Island, New York, to form a part of the 42d Rainbow Division, which was to be sent to France as soon as assembled and shipping was available. The Captain waited until the entertainment was completed, then gave this information to the audience. What a change came over them in an instant! From a laughing, appreciative audience, it changed immediately to one of sadness and tears. August 16th was a busy day, packing and saying farewells. August 17th the Company entrained amid a vast throng of people for Des Moines and a regimental camp at Iowa State Fair Grounds.

When the State Fair opened a few days later many of the friends of the company came to visit the men and to attend the fair. August 20th the company strength was increased by 54 men from Company "M" of Fairfield and 45 men from Cherokee, Iowa, bringing the company

strength to 250 enlisted men and three officers. September 10, 1917, this company with Company "L", under the command of Captain Ross, formed a train en route to Camp Mills, Long Island, New York, where it arrived on September 13th late in the afternoon. September 14th four additional Lieutenants were assigned to the company making a complete war strength of officers. A stiff training programme of drill and physical training was laid out for the Division for the next 30 days, then October 18th the regiment was transported to Hoboken, New Jersey, where it went aboard the transport 'President Grant', which was a captured German vessel of the Hamburg-American Line, caught in New York harbor on the declaration of war. The German crew of the ship was left aboard for some time and this gave them time to sabotage the engines, which finally caused the ship to return to port after five days at sea. October 27th the 'President Grant' arrived back in New York harbor and unloaded at Hoboken Pier about 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon and ordered to the old Camp Mills, where company "M" was unloaded in a downpour of rain. It took four days to establish our old camps and secure stoves for heat, for the weather had turned cold. The next two weeks were spent in training. November 14th Company "M" made another effort to get to France and our Rainbow Division. This time as passengers on board the S. S. Celtic, an English ship by way of Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Liverpool, England. November 16th, the Halifax harbor was reached. The ocean convoy was assembled here and on November 18th, with an English battleship as convoy protection, Company "M" put to sea again. November 28th the ship ran into Belfast, Ireland, harbor to escape the danger of German submarines and the Company had Thanksgiving dinner served here. November 30th, the S.S. Celtic raised anchor and with other ships, with five navy destroyers, two of them U. S. as extra protection, made a dash for Liverpool, which place was reached at 2:00 o'clock A. M. and anchored until morning to await a turn at the docks. It was after 3:30 P. M. before Company "M" reached the dock and 6:00 P. M. before a train was ready for landing Company "M", which train was under command of Captain Ross, and the destination was Winchester, England, where the train arrived at 3:30 o'clock A. M. The camp to which the troops were assigned proved to be 3½ miles in the country. The Iowa troops remained in the camp until December 9th, when they were moved to Southampton and into the channel transport Prince George, leaving at 4:40 o'clock P. M. for an all night journey to La Havre, France, arriving in the early morning hours.

December 9, 1917, and Sunny France viewed through a rainstorm. Disembarking, the troops were marched to Rest Camp No. 2, where the men were placed under sheds out of the rain but no barracks were vacant, although warm meals were available. Tuesday, December 11, 1917, the troops were initiated into the kind of transportation with which they were to become very familiar during their service in France. The side door sleeper or box cars holding twenty (20) men or 8 horses. The train passed through Rouen, Nantes and Versailles, which is a suburb of Paris, and at 7:30 o'clock December 12th had arrived at Rima Court. Here Company "M" was billeted in different places, in lofts, attics of houses, barns and hay mows. These billets were to be the home of Company "M" for several weeks. The next station for Company "M" was Voisines, a small town near General Pershing's headquarters. Since arriving at Winchester, England, to the present date in February, Company "M" had a siege with scarlet fever, measles and mumps with one death. (Norbert Wilson from Elliot, Iowa.)

Tuesday, February 19th, Company "M" left Voisines, France, for

duty at the front, training in trench warfare with a French regiment and were billeted in Badmenil near the front, close enough that we could hear the boom of artillery and see airplane combats. At this town and on March 3, 1918, Captain Ross was called to Regimental Headquarters and notified that Company "M" had been selected to be assigned to put over a raid on enemy trenches supported by a French Battalion and that Captain Casey of Company "F" of Villisca with his company would put on a similar raid in another sector of the regimental front with French Battalion support. The object of the raids, given in official orders, was the same for both companies. To penetrate the enemy's lines, 'to mop up' his trenches, to destroy his dug-outs and emplacements and to capture prisoners. In reality, the combat operation was for the express purpose of testing the morale of the American soldiers and their combat efficiency and also for the French soldiers and civilians to know whether or not this American army, coming to aid them, could be depended upon in tight combat. Later information disclosed that the two companies of Infantry from Montgomery County, Iowa, were the first American troops to furnish offensive combat as units in the American Army and the first to fight in the German trenches. The sector over which Company "F" operated was open ground while that assigned to Company "M" was through brush and woods. In a rear area two fields duplicating closely the terrain in which the companies would operate and the German trench system which they would enter were laid out in detail and here the companies rehearsed for four days the proposed operations. The companies moved into the areas assigned on March 8, 1918, and on March 9th completed the raids.

The Commanding Officer of the 128th French Division under whose orders this operation was performed had this to say in his official report about the action: "The American officers and soldiers conducted themselves superbly, rivaling our own in dash. In spite of the bombardment of the assembling places during which they suffered killed and wounded, they maintained their coolness and at the zero hour proceeded to the assault with the most splendid bravery."

In this operation Company "M" had seven men killed and twenty-three (23) wounded. As the company had a strength of less than 250 enlisted men, the losses exceeded ten (10) per cent. This officer had frequently been told that any organization having ten per cent casualties in an action should be classed as veterans. Thus Company "M" in its first offensive contact with the Germans rated as veterans.

The 42d Rainbow Division having completed a month of front line training with the French 128th Division was relieved and started toward a rest area and for open order training. The German spring offensive farther to the north, however, changed its orders. All French divisions which could be spared were relieved from front line positions and sent to stop this offensive. Accordingly the 42d Rainbow Division was ordered to relieve the 128th French Division in the front and on March 29, 1918 the 42d Rainbow Division took the old sector of the front where it had received its trench training. Here Company "M" took turns every sixteenth day at front line positions. This front had become very active and more casualties were being added to the list of dead and wounded. Company "M" was in the front line May 15, 1918, when a very disturbing event occurred. The Indiana heavy field artillery moved a gun into an old artillery position far to the rear and started firing. A one

hundred fifty-five (155) caliber shell fell short and landed in our lines striking a shelter being used as a platoon headquarters, setting it afire and killing Lieut. McElvain, Sergeant Clem Hobbs and Private Max Hubbell and severely wounding George Bolt, also Irvine O. McConnell, who later died, also slightly wounded five others. On June 19, 1918, Company "M" had its last tour of front line duty in this, Pexoune sector, and was relieved along with the 42d Rainbow Division to be moved farther north and to a more active front as the Division was now considered to be ready for heavy combat duty.

Our destination proved to be the Champagne sector, where the Company arrived on July 4, 1918. This was an inactive front but high command expected a full scale attack from the German army. This attack came on July 14, 1918 and really was a fierce attack, but the unusual tactics used by the French General Gourand assured a victory. Company "M" had a second line position here and lost only three men killed, Louis Weiss, August Van Oyen and Robert Reed, and ten gassed and wounded. On July 19th the Rainbow Division was relieved from this front and ordered farther north. This move brought the division to Chateau Thierry where it relieved the 26th U. S. Yankee Division on July 25, 1918, and advanced to the attack on July 26th. Company "M" was not engaged on the 26th but on July 27th it took the advance to the Ourcq River, when it came under terrible shell fire and several men were wounded including Lieutenant Erickson, who had been in command since the middle of March, when Captain Ross had been placed in command of the first Battalion. On July 28th Company "M" got across the Ourcq River and under the Command of Lieutenant Briggs wrote one of the most brilliant chapters in its history. Here in the battle for Hill 212 it lost the old, solid core of its manhood which had made it a prize company since leaving Iowa. The men it lost in killed and wounded were replaced by men from the National Army secured through the Selective Service Act and they did not have the same Company "M" spirit. One officer and twelve men were killed in the action and so many wounded that the combat strength was reduced to four officers and eighty-eight men. Probably the most outstanding fact regarding the officers and men of Company "M" indicating their courage under fire in this action was the issuing of General Orders from General Pershing's Headquarters recommending eleven officers and men for the Distinguished Service Cross which decoration is given only for valor. When it is considered that the officers and men of the 168th Infantry Regiment, consisting of fifteen companies, received recommendations for a total of forty Distinguished Service Crosses and Company "M" in one action received eleven (11) of the forty (40) it indicated the fury of the battle and the outstanding qualities of its officers and men. During the action Company "M" captured thirty-nine (39) live Germans from the 4th Prussian Guard, the Kaiser's own, with a record of never yielding a prisoner and twelve (12) light machine guns from which the Germans had been driven. It was in this action that Maurice Stephenson, Earl Mayers and Marion Campbell from Red Oak section of the Company were killed.

On August 10, 1918, the Rainbow Division stood relieved from the Chateau Thierry front and was ordered to the rear to receive replacements, clothing and equipment and to take up training to make it into a shock Division. This movement required the use of railroads to move and on August 18th the Division entrained for the south. Its final destination proved to be an area around Beaumont, Company "M's" station was Chaumont La Ville. It was expected that some time would pass in training before the Division would be called for battle again but on the night of August 29th the Division was on the march

again toward what later turned out to be the Saint Mihiel front, where after night marches, the Division arrived on September 10th. The next day orders were received assigning the Rainbow Division to deliver the hammer blow. The third Battalion, including Company "M", was to lead the 168th Regiment. September 12, 1918, the battle began, Company "M" with Captain Christopher in Command and a large percentage of recruits, without battle experience, led the attack. They met a vicious and well placed machine-gun fire and in herding the recruits along, officers and sergeants were marked for sharp shooters, and the Company lost many valuable leaders, Major Brewer, the Battalion commander, was seriously wounded, also Captain Christopher, and Lieutenants Cury and Dorcy were killed. Sergeant McManus and other leaders were killed. The sacrifice of these men, however, was not in vain, for the Germans' line soon broke and prisoners were soon being taken in large numbers.

By September 28th this Saint Mihiel front being secure for the American Army, the Rainbow Division was withdrawn and moved to the Verdun Front and Argonne sector, where it was to have its most severe battle and a battle that broke the German spirit and led to the Armistice which ended the war. Company "M" having had such a severe battle in the Saint Mihiel front was put in regimental reserve for this action and did not come into the front line until the battle was over, hence its losses were light.

After the enemy had been severely defeated in the Argonne fortified area, he withdrew to his final line of defense along the Meuse River leaving enough troops to impede the advance of the American army. The Rainbow Division was relieved and placed in reserve with the First Corps. On November 2d the march to Sedan and the Meuse River began in an effort to bring the war to a close. Soon the Rainbow Division was called upon to relieve the 78th American Division and Company "M" again became the leading company for the 168th regiment. The company reached the heights overlooking the Meuse River at Port Magus and in this location were relieved from what proved to be their last battle position. Two days later the signing of the Armistice was confirmed.

The Rainbow Division was assigned to the Army of Occupation to take up position in defense along the Rhine River in Germany. The Division assembled on the German side of the Argonne battlefield and November 17, 1918, began the long march to the Rhine River which was reached on December 16, 1918. Here Company "M" was assigned billets in Neiderzissen, which was some seven kilometers from the Rhine River.

Here they spent the time in Routine drill and battalion problems until March 6, 1919, when they were assigned billets in Niederbreisig for the same duty. Here on March 9th Company "M" celebrated the first anniversary of its going into action in France.

Early in the month of April, 1919, the Rainbow Division was relieved from duty with the 3d Army and ordered to prepare for a journey to the United States and on April 8, 1919, Company "M" entrained for the Port of Breast, where it arrived in the afternoon of April 11, 1919. The Company left Breast, France, on April 18th on the transport S S Leviathan. It arrived in New York Harbor in the afternoon of April 25th but did not unload until the next morning and then was transferred to Camp Upton, Long Island. Here final preparations for the journey to Camp Dodge, Iowa, were made and on May 11, 1919, entrained and three days later arrived in Des Moines.

May 15th was a holiday in Des Moines. People, friends and relatives of the men thronged the streets. The parade in the afternoon was the final military formation. At eleven o'clock P. M. trains moved the regiment to Camp Dodge, where final papers for discharge of the men were prepared for their exit from the army. Special trains took the companies to their various home stations. Company "M" arrived in Red Oak on Saturday, May 17, 1919. Preparations had been going on for weeks for the patriotic reception for the company which was held on Monday, May 19, 1919. This was a splendid reception and one long to be remembered by the soldiers of Company "M" and the citizens of Red Oak and Montgomery County. (See Red Oak Express, issue of May 22, 1919, for details.)

It would be a tragic omission to fail to include in this story of Company "M" 168th Infantry World War I, during its nearly two years of service, eighteen months of which were spent over-seas, a record of its personnel. It had twenty-four officers and four hundred eighty (480) enlisted men during this service. Of the twenty-four officers, four (4) were killed in action, four (4) were wounded, and of the four killed in action two had been previously wounded. Of the four hundred eighty (480) enlisted men named, forty-nine (49) were killed in action and one hundred sixty-one (161) were wounded, six of the killed in action had previously been wounded and one wounded twice previously. Of the one hundred sixty-one wounded, twenty-three (23) were wounded the second time. Using the present method of counting casualties, used in the Korean fighting, this totaled two hundred and fifty-one casualties, which is 50% of the total strength officers and men.

Of the two hundred fifty Iowans who left the Fairgrounds in September 1917, thirty-nine (39) were killed in action, one hundred eleven (111) were wounded, sixteen of them wounded the second time and one the third time. Two of the original number died from disease. Norbert Wilson of Elliot, Iowa, of Scarlet Fever, being infected on the transport going over-seas, and George H. Hawkins of Pneumonia, during the march to Germany.

This Company "M" had two (2) deaths from disease out of the five hundred officers and men during World War I, while it lost five deaths from disease out of one hundred men in 1898.

Almost one year passed before the younger generation felt the patriotic spirit and began the organization of a military company in Red Oak, but at that they were the second organization to be formed in the old regimental area. On March 31, 1920, a company was reactivated as the 2d Separate Company and retained the designation until enough organizations were in evidence to form a regiment. Charles O. Briggs was the Captain, Russell Hardwick First Lieutenant and Charles M. Totty Second Lieutenant and ninety-nine (99) enlisted men.

The company continued under the designated 2d Separate Company until the 168th Regiment was activated in 1921. The Tables of organization under which the regiment was organized called for every fourth (4th) company to become a machine-gun company. If the 2d Separate Company took the letter "M" it must become a machine-gun company. Having been one of the first companies to be organized after Company "M" 168th Infantry ceased to exist, the membership of this 2d Separate Company had a choice of the letters assigned to infantry companies but the men decided that they wanted to retain all the traditions of Company "M" through the past twenty-

seven (27) years and elected to become a machine-gun company. The tactics and equipment of a machine-gun company were entirely different from that of the infantry. Such a company is a supporting one instead of an offensive character and as a result of the change in weapons and tactics, it took years to develop machine-gun trained officers and men. During the next ten years the company had five captains, Charles O. Briggs, Charles F. Wilson, Guy E. Hobbs, Joseph D. Tiffin and Paul A. Michael. On January 11, 1932, Merrill R. Hawkins took command and for the next six years made some progress in machine-gun training and tactics. On August 1, 1938, Russell A. Weilenman took over the organization and under his command Company "M" was inducted into active Federal Service February 10, 1941, for service in World War II.

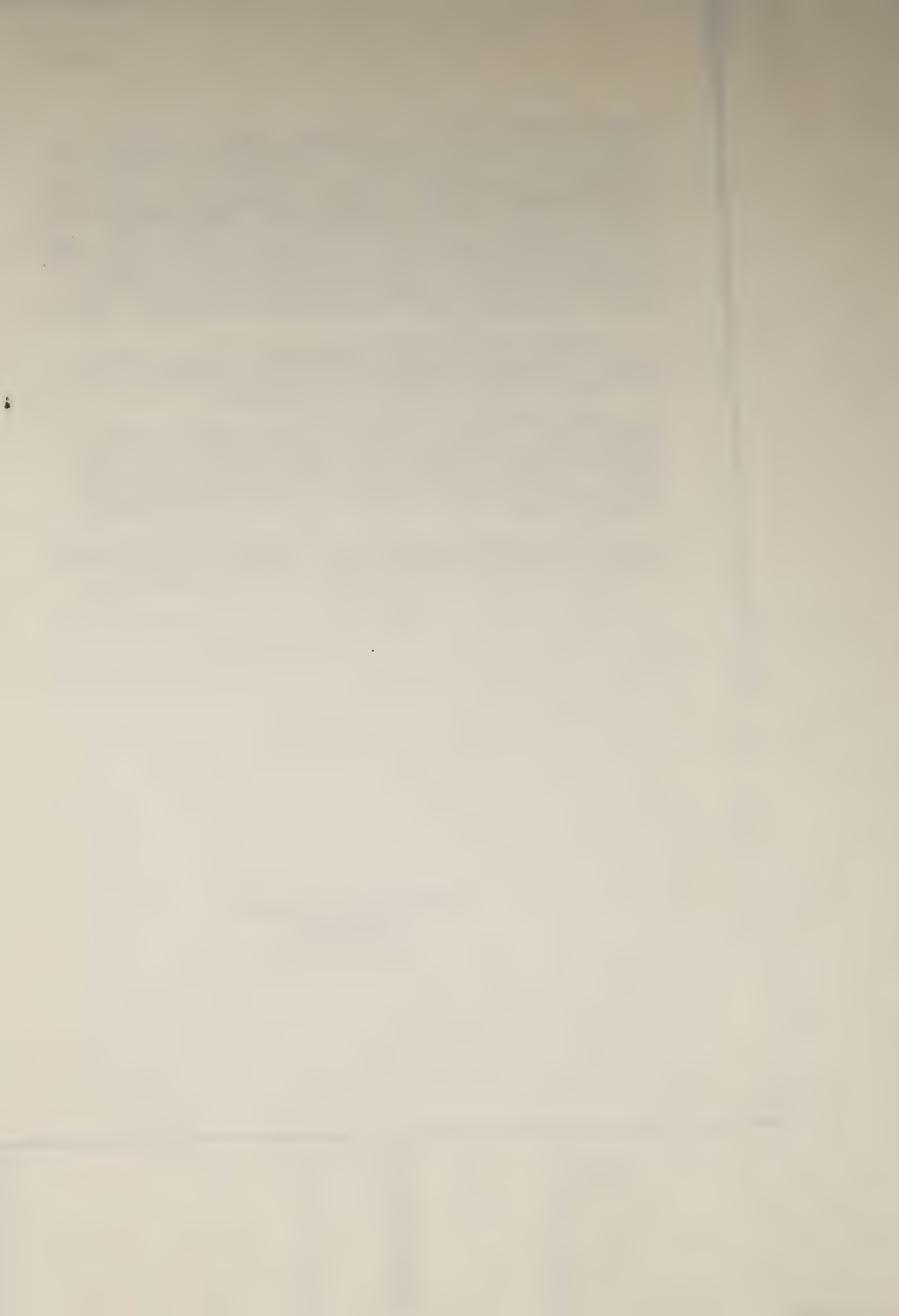
The writer was retired from active duty with the Iowa National Guard on July 8, 1940, having reached the retirement age. The story of Company "M" 168 Infantry during World War II will have to be written by some one familiar with that conflict.

Company "M" was reactivated May 5, 1947, under the command of Captain Duane A. Johnson, who is in command to-day. It is the understanding that a larger and more suitable armory is to be made available in the near future. This will give the Company ample storage room so they can be issued all the equipment for a machine-gun company and permit the officers and men to become accustomed to handling such.

In this new home and under present laws governing the National Guard, it is predicted Company "M" will continue to retain its character as one of the best companies in the Iowa National Guard.

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